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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY USSR

SUBJECT Conditions in Estonia: Reconstruction in Tallinn/
Deportations/Living Conditions/Reaction to Stalin's Death/
Foreign Broadcasts/Estonian-Soviet Contacts/Merchant Shipping

50X1-HUM

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DATE DISTR. 7 Aug 1953

NO. OF PAGES 3

NO. OF ENCLS.

SUPP. TO
REPORT NO.

50X1-HUM

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1. "The following information on conditions in Estonia date through early May 1953:

Reconstruction in Tallinn

2. "Tallinn has changed very much since 1939. The entire section around Harju Street is a green lawn with ornamental shrubs and some flower beds. As generally known, that part of the town was entirely destroyed by the giant Soviet air raid on 8 March 1944. The authorities have no intention of re-habilitating it and therefore have turned it into a park. The 'Estonia' theater, which also suffered during that raid, has been fully repaired. The building of the Officers Mess on Sakala Street, which was started during the independence, has been finished. It serves as headquarters for all sorts of semi-official propaganda agencies: the trade unions, the Pioneers, the Writers' Association. Some houses have been rehabilitated and new ones built here and there, especially in the suburbs around the factories which build for their own workers. A large cinema is being built between Karja, Posti and Muurivahe Streets.

Soviets in Tallinn

3. "Tallinn is full of Soviets, some of them serving in the Navy, some in the administration and some working as simple workers. Russian is the dominating language in the Tallinn streets - partly, of course, because the Soviets are inclined to be so much louder than the Estonians.

Deportations

4. "People are still being arrested one by one and deported but there have been no large scale deportations since 1949. However, a number of farmers from the Harjuma district (the immediate vicinity of Tallinn) were deported en masse in March 1953. The exact number is unknown but people talk of several train loads. The reason was not given but rumour says that it was to clear the

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coastal region and environs of Tallinn of suspect elements who might give help to an invading army in case of war.

Living Conditions

5. "The living standard of the people has sunk exceedingly low. The salaries are quite inadequate. For example, a second engineer on a tramp steamer of about 3000 tons gets a monthly salary of 1000 rubles; a simple seaman gets only 450-500 rubles per month. The ship's politruk, on the contrary, gets 2500 'for doing nothing'. The average monthly wage of a worker is 500 rubles.
6. "One can manage to buy food of a sort for one's income but clothing is a real problem - a man's suit costs 2500-3000 rubles. After Stalin's death the prices were cut, but such cuts were merely an advertisement. Earlier a kg of butter cost 50 rubles. Immediately after the price cut butter was available for 38 rubles the kilo. After a couple of weeks the price began to rise again. In Tallinn at the beginning of May 1953, butter cost 49 rubles. Other prices have followed the same pattern.

Reaction to Stalin's Death

7. "After Stalin's death not only the Estonians but also the decent Soviets in Tallinn were happy in their hearts and hoped that there would be a softening of the regime. The subsequent disappointment was great. Everything remained as it was, and now everybody fears that the pressure will increase. Nobody knows what Malenkov stands for. He is hardly spoken of any more. There is a general conviction that the power after Stalin has gone over to Beria, and he is believed to be the equal of Stalin in cruelty.

Reaction to VOA

8. "The Estonians await nothing with such longing as a war, be it never so horrible. The Soviets, on the contrary, fear war. Even the officers believe that they would be beaten by the Americans if it came to an armed conflict. The broadcasts of the Voice of America are listened to throughout Estonia. Those who have no radio hear the news from their comrades at their places of work. Thus the Estonians are not uninformed about events in the free world. They are very interested in the political activities of their refugee countrymen and put great hopes on them, believing that they will do whatever is possible to help liberate their country from the Communist terror.
9. "The Soviet officers also listen to Voice of America in Russian. They are not afraid to discuss the news with the Estonians they know. It requires a good deal of courage for Soviets to listen to foreign broadcasts as it is strictly forbidden them. They are liable to harsh penalties. The radio listening activities of civilians are passed over in silence if they do not talk about it. The Soviets jam the Western radios strongly. However, radio knowledge is so spread in the country that most people have constructed special wire frames which largely eliminate the jamming.

Estonian - Soviet Contacts

10. "The people deported to the USSR are allowed to correspond with their relatives in Estonia at rare intervals. Some Estonians have even visited their deported relatives in Soviet camps. This is not simple. All sorts of permits are required; their procurement takes time, energy and money. Many of the people deported in 1941 have died. A very few have returned to Estonia. No Estonian moves to the USSR voluntarily as conditions there are even worse than those at home. The young people who are being sent to the USSR go very unwillingly and do their best to avoid going at all.

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11. "There is very little intercourse between Estonians and Soviets in Estonia. The Estonians keep to themselves. Even the children do not play with Soviet children. Everybody feels not only hostility towards the Soviets but also contempt because they are so uncouth and uncivilized and at the same time so overbearing and boastful.

Merchant Shipping

12. "The life of a seaman under Soviet rule is infinitely harder than it was in free Estonia. On a voyage the seamen never have a Sunday or holiday. In the ports of 'capitalist' countries they may go on land only in groups accompanied by a ship's officer. Officers may go in pairs, never alone, and are responsible for one another. These prohibitions do not apply in the Satellite ports, e g in Poland and the Soviet Zone of Germany. Every ship has a politruk. He gives the crew some sort of political instruction every day. Sometimes this is limited to Soviet broadcasts with comments by the politruk. Sometimes he reads a chapter from a book of lectures. In foreign ports the crew are sometimes allowed to play football under the supervision of the politruk or the officers

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